

23 October 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Communist Party Reaction to Kovalev Pravda Article

1. Among the theories advanced to explain the Kremlin's motives for publishing the Kovalev article are the following:

A. The CPSU hoped to evoke favorable response from foreign Communists -- which would lend international Communist muscle to what is clearly a singularly Soviet doctrine.

B. The Kremlin hoped to frighten recalcitrant Communist parties to heed more closely Moscow's dicta or face Soviet intervention, military or otherwise.

2. If indeed Kremlin leaders had either of the above motives in mind in authorizing the Kovalev thesis, then neither motive has been successful. For the most part, the Kovalev thesis has been greeted with silence by Free World and even Bloc Communist Parties. Of the four Communist parties which have responded only the East Germans have come out in favor of the new doctrine. The other three, Great Britain, Austria, and Yugoslavia, have all responded negatively and defiantly.

3. The British Communist party voiced strong condemnation of the Kovalev thesis in its house organ Morning Star on September 27, 1968: "It is to be hoped that Mr. Kovalev's thesis will be speedily and officially repudiated...It would do irreparable damage to the unity of the international Communist movement and relations between socialist states if it gained any further currency."

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4. Austrian CP Central Committee member Heno Kostmann, writing in Voksstimme of October 9, examines the Kovalev article in considerable detail, notes its contradictions, and disavows the doctrine Kovalev advocates as a danger to the survival of the world Communist movement:

"Which, "class criterion", however, does away with this norm of respecting sovereignty -- which in relations with the capitalist countries is rightly respected very accurately by the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries -- in relations with a fraternal socialist country? There is no such 'class criterion', and there cannot be.

Relations of a new type have developed among the fraternal socialist countries, particularly since the 20th CPSU Congress. These norms are even laid down in writing, and vested through signatures, in countless protocols, agreements by party and government leaders, as well as in facts and treaties among socialist countries, for instance, the Warsaw Pact. These norms include respect for autonomy, sovereignty, and noninterference, as well as the principle of equality in relations. To this is added the obligation to render mutual aid, including mutual military aid, against either the threat of attack or an already launched military attack. However, no norm exists or has existed anywhere giving a socialist country or a group of such countries the right to intervene in a fraternal socialist country. Incidentally, such a right of intervention is in conflict with all existing norms of relations among fraternal socialist countries and among Communist parties...

Hence judging the problems of the world socialist system, as far as they have general significance for world Communism, cannot be considered an "autonomous" or "sovereign" matter of this group of Communist parties, let alone a matter of one leading party, which of course could only be the CPSU. This party

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itself has renounced its claim to leadership. This renunciation has been laid down in the documents of the world Communist movement, at the CPSU's own proposal. The violation of this norm, through the one-sided and arbitrary action of the Soviet Union and its four Warsaw Pact allies against a fraternal socialist country and against a fraternal socialist party, has led to a crisis in the world Communist movement. The way out of this crisis cannot be found in drawing up one-sided theories, but only through democratic cooperation of equal, autonomous Communist parties of the entire world. On any basis other than this, the basis of autonomy, a world Communist movement is not possible. It is an urgent requirement of our age."

5. Perhaps the most significant criticism of the Kovalev thesis has come from the Yugoslavs, who have alluded to or cited Kovalev in several articles and broadcasts. One of the strongest condemnations of the Kovalev thesis was mounted by Z. Zujobic, writing in Politika, September 27, 1968:

"... this idea was worked out long ago when Stalin was still alive. It results in the irrefutable obligation of subordinating oneself to so-called higher interests which, by the logic of the development and correlation of forces, are always and inevitably determined by the strongest nation. Although after Stalin's death the very principle of a center in the world Communist movement was repeatedly rejected, the action of the five countries in Czechoslovakia returns us in many respects to the past and to rejected and obsolete theses. (italics ours)... The subordination of socialism to the so-called higher interests of any socialist country or group of countries, and to their freedom to decide over this, and the identification of socialism with the borderlines of these countries will result in the underestimation of socialism's strength...The article has everything. What is missing is only that it should overtly say that the progressive social forces in Czechoslovakia were not sufficiently mature or able to fulfill their tasks. If he had formulated this idea too, the author would perhaps

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have asked the question which is characteristic of this approach to the problems of our time: Does socialism have any chance to be victorious and to preserve itself outside of the Soviet Union?"

6. Yugoslav President Tito, who for twenty years has fought Soviet attempts to control his Party and country, spoke to his nation on October 20th and warned the Soviet Bloc not to interfere in the affairs of Yugoslavia. In what was surely a reference to current Soviet doctrine as enunciated by Kovalev, Tito stated:

"Comrades, as far as attempts are concerned to justify to a certain extent the case of Czechoslovakia... a theory was raised that sovereignty was not vital for small nations. Well, it did not say small nations but that is what was meant. An attempt was made in this connection to legalize something which is even contrary to the Atlantic Charter and which is stressed everywhere... Sovereignty and territorial integrity have existed for centuries -- that is, a principle has existed that long -- and we must sharply oppose such theories... the small nations are in danger. The small nations should act unitedly. They should agree... that nobody has the right to interfere in their internal affairs. These countries have the right to defend their sovereignty."

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Remarks: Attached is more material
for Mrs. Fosdick as requested
in your memo of 15 Oct.

[redacted]

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